

[Rat Yarn]

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Folklore

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

Washington

J. J. Stauter

Seattle, Washington

December 19, 1938

"Rat Yarn"

1. Cleve Woodley, Seattle, Washington

2. December 19, 1938

5. A. F. of L. Union Hall

4. None

5. None

6. None Folklore FORM B Personal History of Informant

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J. J. Stauter

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"Rat Yarn"

Cleve Woodley, Seattle, Washington

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etc. (Not obtained)

Folk Stuff Stauter Dec. 19, 1938

A rat yarn, told by Cleve Woodley, retired sound skipper:

"Years ago I was shipping out of Port Townsend as a quartermaster. In those days there was more rats on the boats than there is now, and the boys used to brag about how big and tough the rats were on their particular ship.

"There was also a lady who run a seamen's boarding house who had a pet white rat that was tame as a kitten. One time a couple of the boys got to wondering what would happen if this white rat was turned loose on board ship among the big Norwegian grey rats. They ended up by stealing the white rat for the experiment.

"The ship was going to Australia and back, so there was plenty of time to see what would happen.

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“Well, the white rat bred with the gray rats, and before long the ship was overrun with the mixture. And the funny thing was, they was even bigger and more ferocious than the pure greys. It seemed like they had no fear or respect for a man at all. The boys in the fo'c'sle had a hard time keeping them out of the way. But the worst thing was when they had to take one of the men up to the skipper for treatment of bites and scratches all over his face and hands. It seems he got some lemon stick candy from the slop-chest and hid it under his mattress, and he hadn't even got sound asleep when two of these mongrel rats tried to get at the candy. The first move he made they turned to on him, and would have just about finished him if the other boys hadn't been nearby.”